

Linda Clair
Five-day Meditation Retreat
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Transcription from Audio Recordings

File 2b – Sunday morning guided meditation

Linda: So counting your breath, each breath, can be a really good way of reining in the thinking, interrupting that momentum of thinking. And it can also show you how many thoughts there are. So it's a very simple practice. Some of you might not have done it before. So you breathe in through the nose and, as you breathe out, silently from the belly count, "one." So the counting is in the body, in the breath – it's not separate, nothing is separate. You breathe in, "two." So it's really with the outbreath down in the belly, in the abdomen. If you have thoughts in-between "one, two, three," but you don't get lost that's fine – just see them; bring your attention back to the counting. But as soon as you get lost – and you might get lost very early on and that doesn't matter – start again at one.

So if you can get to ten without losing it, without losing count, just go back and start at one again. So this stops you just counting without being aware of really what's going on. So you breathe in, "one," breathe in, "two." So it can be really good to use when your mind is particularly busy or just at the beginning of a sitting. Just to rein your mind in and establish that intention.

And it can be very difficult to not let yourself be led into thinking and this counting technique shows you how difficult that can be. Because sometimes all you want to do is get really deeply into thinking, which is really deeply into not being here. So it can feel at times a bit cool and mechanical. But after a sitting where you've been doing quite a bit of counting you can feel particularly alive, particularly clear. Because you haven't been caught up in that momentum, that incredible momentum of thinking.

So thinking creates this idea that we're going somewhere – you're going somewhere in time. And when you do apply the counting it can feel a bit frustrating at times because you feel like you're not going anywhere. But that's the whole idea of it – it brings you back to where you are. So this momentum of thinking builds up in your body over the years and that's why at times it's so difficult to keep your body still, consciously still for periods, because thinking is really restlessness, dissatisfaction. But really the main factor, reason that most people think comes from fear, and that's what motivates thinking – fear of actually being here.

So you also need to remember that your mind is not your enemy. This is not a battle or a competition. What we're doing here is looking very closely and deeply at the thinking process.

So sit, and watch.